

## **DEACON JOHN HALL'S HOMILY**

### **Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 25, 2021**

One of the reasons I really appreciate this post Easter season is because the First Reading each Sunday from Easter to Pentecost is taken from the Acts of Apostles. These readings are not in consecutive order and like the Book of Acts of the Apostles, they are not a day-by-day account but just glimpses of some of the great moments and personalities like Peter and Paul. And you might find, like I have, that seemingly small decisions and small acts of kindness – like Barnabas inviting the forgotten and untrusted convert Paul, to go a missionary trip with him - made all the difference in the world in the spread of Christianity.

Since we binge watch some TV shows for hours at a time, do you mind if we binge read for 5 minutes the first three chapters of the Act of the Apostles so I can get you caught up to today's First Reading from the Fourth Chapter of Acts?

In Chapter One of Acts the opening reads “In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught ...” indicating the author had written a previous work and you probably know, the author of Acts is also the author of the Gospel of Luke. Then we find, Peter, reluctantly taking the lead after the death of Jesus. The first thing he did was gather the other disciples in the Upper Room and cast lots – yes kind of like rolling dice - between Justus and Matthias to take the place of Judas.

Chapter 2 of Acts, 50 days after the resurrection, while Jews gathered in Jerusalem for their Feast of Pentecost the disciples huddled in the upper room until they finally recognized and welcomed the Holy Spirit. Peter delivered an inspirational speech and over 3000 men were baptized that day. House meetings were the form of the early church as the Word and community began to spread.

In Acts 3 Peter and John were going to the temple for three o'clock prayer when they encountered a regular at the temple, a man disabled since birth and was asked for a handout. Peter said: “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk.” And the man did – he was healed! I am not sure whose face I'd

like to see – the surprise of the healed man or maybe Peter’s look of hey what just happened!?! Peter launched into a long speech of why should anyone be surprised that the man was healed. The crowds gathered as Peter went into the temple and continued his speech . . . until the superintendent of the Temple and Sadducees confronted them “...disturbed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day . . . [when] their leaders, elders, and scribes were assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly class.” “...and questioned them, “By what power or by what name have you...” healed this man?” This is the same Sanhedrin that Jesus faced just two months prior and we know what happened to him. But Peter comes through, He tells the Supreme Court of Jerusalem: “It was done in the name of Jesus Christ – the one whom you crucified . . . the one whom you rejected . . . Way to go Peter! You spoke truth to the powers! And then the Sanhedrin ordered ... oh wait, my 5 minutes is up . . . I guess you’ll have to go home and get your bible out and turn to Acts chapter 4:13 and find out what the Sanhedrin decided to do next.

Peter, even after denying Jesus, his teacher and friend three times when he was most in need, finally comes through and no longer denies but **proclaims** his relationship with the Lord!

Isn’t this what God asks of us? A willingness to proclaim our relationship with the Lord especially in those difficult situations in our lives. May we, like Peter, be filled with the Spirit as we build the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ.